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6 December 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with The President - 9:45 - 6 December 1963

The first part of the meeting involved a discussion with Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, William Bundy and McGeorge Bundy concerning the procedures on MLF.

Rusk requested, and received, approval to brief General Eisenhower and will arrange to have Amb. Merchant, Admiral Ricketts and General Goodpastor present at the briefing. Rusk reported that a group of "young Republicans" opposed the MLF.

Rusk also received approval to brief certain Congressional leaders in small groups, but to intimate that no government, including the United States Government, is committed to the MLF program.

Rusk gave an optimistic report on progress and stated the most important objectives of the MLF was to give the Germans a sense of participation in nuclear weapons planning and operations under a scheme providing adequate control by other Allied nations, including the United States.

McNamara stated that Mr. von Hassel had advised him that the MLF was a "must" or else the Germans would undoubtedly pursue an independent course in developing their own national nuclear weapons resources. Rusk indicated that failure to proceed with the MLF might force a German-French arrangement on nuclear weapons. McNamara stated there was no military requirement for the MLF but the force will have a military (?) utility and will permit a reduction in planned United States national capabilities and hence the cost, which is considerable, is not really an additional U.S. military cost.

The President then suggested a briefing of Congressional leaders, both Democratic and Republican, Senate and House, substantially along the lines of the NSC briefing of yesterday afternoon. I brought up the question of security and pointed out the dangers. The President asked that I develop a 10 or 15 minute briefing on Soviet strategic capabilities, Soviet defense and Soviet economy, going just as far as I possibly could without endangering sources and methods.

ACTION: Discuss with Cline, et al.

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The meeting then continued with the President, McGeorge Bundy and McCone. I discussed the foreign aid figures as included in the 6 December memorandum and the special report on Soviet Foreign Economics Programs of 25 October, and stated that I would prepare for the President some special graphics which would show Soviet foreign, economic and military aid, both extensions and draw-downs, to non-Communist countries and Cuba.

NOTE: Mr. Rostow raised the question earlier as to the validity of comparing our aid figures with USSR's aid figures because the latter did not include aid to satellites. His position is that since we include aid to NATO countries, particularly Turkey, Greece, South Korea, etc., we should examine USSR aid to their satellites in addition to Cuba. This should be examined. I do not know whether the figures are available.

The President reviewed the Checklist and I made the following comments:

1. I expect the USSR to expand the test ban agreement to cover underground tests and it was quite possible they would soon make claims for vast improvements in seismology. I mentioned the recent information on the LASER beam.

2. I pointed out the seriousness of the Cambodian situation stating the fact that the Khmer Serei clandestine radio had been located in Southeast Thailand and that my information was that the Thais were not inclined to put it out of business because the Cambodians were broadcasting unfavorably against them.

3. I noted the additional indicators of possible conflict over Malaysia.

I then explained to the President the source of our information that the Soviet Intelligence Service, on orders from Moscow, was attempting to stimulate communications from India to him, Chief Justice Warren and the Attorney General, urging a full probe into the assassination of the President. I stated that this report comes from a very reliable penetration and we evaluate it quite highly.

We then discussed the assignment of Peer de Silva to Saigon. I stated that the staff had made such recommendation to me, but that I felt it was only a good move if he was to remove Ambassador Lodge. He felt that to do this would have political repersucc

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tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the military junta, that it would indicate President Johnson's support of Diem rather than the present authorities. Therefore he stated he could not move to remove Lodge but hoped that Lodge would remove himself and become a candidate for the Republican nomination for the Presidency and would be the nominee. (Note: I told the President he wanted things too easy). I told the President that Lodge would destroy de Silva if he opposed his assignment or did not like him, or wished to get rid of him. The President said he would communicate most emphatically with Lodge in this regard and asked Bundy to write an appropriate communication. I told the President this would do no good, that Lodge was absolutely unconscionable in matters of this kind and he had resorted to trickery time and time again during the Eisenhower administration and that he never failed to use the newspapers in order to expose an individual or block an action. I therefore could only conclude that if he was going to keep Lodge on that it would be better to stay with David Smith as Chief of Station, who is a most competent officer but young and not fully experienced, but this proposal did not meet his request that the best and most experienced man we can find be placed on the job. The President said he would exercise the full power of his office to keep Lodge in line and felt our responsibilities in South Vietnam are so great that CIA should have a "four-star man" on the job and that is what he wanted.

JAM/mcm